



# Abex says waste lagoons haven't tainted water

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Staff Writer

Officials of the Abex Corp. say water samples show that four waste water lagoons at the firm's iron-casting plant in Mahwah — cited as a potential hazard to drinking supplies in a Congressional report — have not contaminated ground water.

"Our monitoring well shows that there was no infiltration," Paul Henning, the company's environmental protection coordinator, said Friday. He said the waste water contains sand dust from the plant, not toxic wastes.

Officials at American Cyanamid, the Wayne-based chemicals and pharmaceuticals manufacturer, also asserted that waste ponds at the company's Organic Chemical Division in Bound Brook had not tainted nearby water supplies. "We've done checks of wells in the surrounding areas and have found no problems," said William Fead, the division's manager of manufacturing and marketing.

The plants were among 12 in New Jersey and 750 nationwide cited by a Congressional subcommittee for maintaining waste lagoons — sites without natural or man-made linings to prevent

seepage into ground water supplies — within a mile of a well.

The study, released Thursday, said the waste ponds — known as "impoundments" — pose a danger to water supplies if used as toxic-waste repositories. However, it did not charge any firms with actual contamination. Questionnaires will be sent to each of the companies to determine how the impoundments are being used.

Henning said that Abex, cited in 1977 as a major water polluter by the federal government, began to monitor ground water near its lagoons last fall. The state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had ordered the company, along with the then-operating Ford Motor Co. plant in Mahwah, to stop using the impoundments, but Abex and the state reached an agreement to monitor the lagoons while they remained in use, Henning said.

"The DEP requested that we drill a monitoring well to see if any of the water from the lagoons was leaking underground. We monitor it and we send them the results regularly," Henning said. "We're doing exactly what they said. We're going along fine. It's no problem for us and it's no problem for them."

"The water pumped out into these lagoons is

the waste water from our air scrubber that takes the dust out of the air in the plant," he added. "It's mostly sand-dust. We're a foundry. We make castings with sand molds, and sometimes the sand becomes airborne. That's when we use the scrubber to spray water through the air to take out the dust particles."

The study was conducted by the DEP, funded by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, and released by a subcommittee of the House Government Operations Committee. The DEP will release its own report soon, said Wayne Saunders, a department geologist.

In New Jersey, there are 73 impoundments, at 12 industrial sites, lying within a mile of potable water wells, the EPA reported. Moreover, the state has 49 industrial sites with impoundments directly above drinking water supplies but more than a mile from a well, the study indicated.

New Jersey ranked 16th among the 50 states in the number of unlined impoundments within one mile of a well, and 14th in the number of unlined lagoons directly above ground-water sources but more than a mile from a well.

Half the country's population and 53 percent of New Jersey's residents depend on ground water, a 1978 EPA study says.

the study cited these industrial sites in New Jersey:

●Agway Country Foods, run out of the Agway Elmer Cooperative Inc. in Elmer, with four impoundments;

●The Aircraft Radio and Control Division of Cessna Aircraft Co. in Boonton, with one impoundment;

●[REDACTED] with 11 impoundments;

●CBS Records, a division of Columbia Broadcasting Systems Inc. in Pitman, with three impoundments;

●Lenox China Inc. in Pomona, with four impoundments;

●Mobil Oil Refinery in Paulsboro, with 11 impoundments;

●Owens-Corning Fiberglass Corp. in Berlin, with two impoundments;

●Scott Paper Co. in Landisville, with one impoundment;

●Stewart Cramer-Cramer Plating and Anodizing in Buttsville, with one impoundment;

●Tenneco Chemicals, Inc. in Burlington, with four impoundments.

Fead, of American Cyanamid's organic chemical division, said that only eight or nine of the 26

In addition to Abex and American Cyanamid, impoundments at the firm's Bound Brook plant are in use as temporary storage for waste water from the plant's water-treatment process.

Downplaying the threat to drinking supplies, Fead said that the ground water under the plant is drawn directly into the facility through three large wells for use in production. He said he based that conclusion on information gleaned from seven monitoring wells around the edge of the plant.

"The chemical processes at our plant use a lot of water," he explained. "The waste water is run into a biological treatment unit where it is worked on by bacteria, like at a city sewage-treatment plant. Then we take the effluent and run it through a filter, and then through huge activated-charcoal tanks. The waste water is then chlorinated and released into the Raritan River."

The waste water is stored in the impoundments while it waits to be channeled through these processes, he added.

The only impoundment at the plant that contains sludge is lined with lime and sanctioned by the DEP, Fead said. About half of the 26 impoundments are filled with dry materials such as iron filings and dust.

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